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THE ART

OF

SKETCHING FROM NATURE

BY

THOMAS ROWBOTHAM

AUTHOR OF "THE ART OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN WATER COLORS"

With Twenty-Seven Illustrations by
THOMAS L. ROWBOTHAM

4069.42

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NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
182 FIFTH AVENUE
1878

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PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE Art Manuals of which this, on "Sketching from Nature" is the first, have had a large and continued sale in England. Among the many different books on such subjects as these treat of, it is difficult to decide which is entitled to the preference; but students of Art who are separated from the ordinary means of getting information on its practical details, have always sought to gain hints and methods through works of this class.

It has been wisely said, that any system of government was better than none, and these words apply well to drawing and painting. Regular ways of work of almost any approved kind, are capable in practised hands of rendering the thoughts and feelings of an artist, which a medley of methods cannot develop.

The books which make up this series are all

by skilful painters, and the rules they lay down are safe and practical. It is a question of methods, whether one painting ought to be so skilfully carried out that the brush should never again touch the canvas; or whether glazes or scumblings should be resorted to; or solid or transparent colors be used in shadows. But as all roads lead to Rome, so any complete style of work thoroughly mastered, we believe to be capable of producing satisfactory results.

The books which are intended to be published in this series, are all well developed systems of their own kind; and the beginner who will carefully follow out the processes recommended cannot fail, if he or she have any natural aptitude for such study, to gain a good foundation, which will then only need practice and observation of effects in good pictures to amplify to any result of which the talent of the person employing them may be capable. In reading over these little rules, the Editor has been struck with the fact that many hints are dropped through the pages which would make a very cursory examination of them suggestive to even an accom-

plished painter. Different schools of art have their own merits, and though simplicity of treatment gets to be more and more esteemed, the further the student goes on, whatever be his system, yet one way of working inevitably throws light on others, and so each thus helps.

Since interest and study of art in its various branches, has become so common of late, it is hoped that these books, though they are only elementary, may serve to put many persons in a good direction of thought and of execution.

In editing them, a very few points and modifications have been suggested which are simple matters of fact and do not touch the processes laid down; or when the Editor has imagined that certain principles were too firmly asserted, she has made the suggestion that eminent artists have sometimes held contrary opinions; in order to prevent the student from settling down into a bigoted belief in his own methods which experience and facts do not justify.

SUSAN N. CARTER.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER, 1877.

PREFACE.

MANY students possessing a certain degree of skill in the use of the lead pencil and chalk are, for want of acquaintance with the necessary rules, entirely at a loss when attempting to commence a landscape sketch from nature; the principal difficulties they experience being, to determine where to begin a sketch, and how much of the subject before them they ought to include within the limits of the paper.

Attention to the precepts contained in the following pages, will, it is hoped, clear away these, and many other difficulties, that obstruct the essay of the sketcher.

The short course of instruction laid down is purely elementary, and confined to *linear* sketching. The limits of this little work do not admit of the introduction of the more advanced stages

of coloring, and its complex manipulations. These, however, are rendered the less necessary here, as they have been already fully entered into and explained, in two works comprising portions of the series to which the present treatise belongs.* One of these, written by the Author of this book, in conjunction with his son, treats of the elementary portion of landscape-painting in water-colors ; and in the other, the subject is continued through its advanced stages by Mr. Aaron Penley, who has laid down, in a full clear manner, all the details of coloring, and the rules for its manipulation, with which it is requisite for the landscape-sketcher to become acquainted.

The instruction attempted to be conveyed in the following pages is the result of many years' active practice of the Author's profession ; and his hopes will be realized if he should be hereby instrumental in assisting the student in his endeavor to acquire the power of "Sketching from Nature."

* "The Art of Landscape Painting in Water-Colors," by T. and T. L. Rowbotham.

"A System of Water-Color Painting," by Aaron Penley. These will shortly be issued by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

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THE ART

OF

SKETCHING FROM NATURE.

In the brief course of instruction proposed in the following pages, the object is to lead the student to a successful result by the simplest means. The rules are few; but if carefully studied, they will be found applicable to every object occurring in ordinary experience; and it is hoped that they will be deemed plain and intelligible. A multiplicity of technical terms and prolix explanations has been purposely avoided, as the end aimed at may be attained without them; but there are some terms which it may be requisite to explain, as they frequently and necessarily occur in the course of these precepts. These terms are,

The Picture :

The Centre of the Picture; commonly, but erroneously, called the point of sight.

The Distance of the Picture :

The Base Line :

The Horizontal Line :

The Vertical Line.

For the sake of rendering these instructions more clear and perspicuous, we shall recapitulate a few of the general principles of linear perspective. This recapitulation will be rapid and concise ; touching only upon those more important points which are in fact indispensible in successful sketching from nature ; and we also purpose to explain the general terms given above. In fact, our object is rather to recall to the recollection of the learner certain principles and methods with which we suppose him already acquainted,—the study of the elements of linear perspective being indeed the very first process to which the attention should be directed in his introduction to the art of drawing.

All objects which present themselves to the

eye in a landscape, such as houses, trees, water, fields, mountains, &c., can be faithfully drawn in corresponding and similar outlines upon a plane surface.

For if a piece of glass be held vertically at a proper distance between the eye and the proposed landscape, so that the part intended to be drawn can be seen through it, it is evident that a tracing of the apparent outlines of all objects so seen through the glass can be made upon its surface, by the use of any instrument, which, when carefully guided over the apparent outline of the objects, would leave, by means of color or any other substance, the traces of its path.

As it is impossible to adopt this process in drawing from nature—the material on which the outline is then made being a non-transparent medium, that is, paper—it is clear that sketching can be only effected by a distinct apprehension of the *real* forms of the objects themselves, and of those apparent forms under which they are presented to the eye in their different positions in the landscape.

Now all these objects have their real outlines

composed either of straight lines, or of curved lines, or of both, which either may be irregular in their relation to each other, or may follow certain given laws and conditions. If the latter be the case, these laws are, for the most part, of such a simple character as to admit of being easily comprehended; and when once the principles, which we shall by and by enumerate, are mastered and understood, the student will find, in the representation of more complex forms of outline, an increasing facility, as his judgment becomes more matured, and his eye more correct.

OF THE HORIZONTAL LINE.

If a spectator were placed in a flat horizontal plain, the water or ground which he would have in view before him would appear to rise from the spot on which he stood, the limit of that rise being determined by a clear and well-defined straight line, called the *horizontal line*. This will at once be understood, in the example of the sea, or of a lake, between which and

the sky no object is supposed to intervene.

This horizontal line—or (as the word* implies) this boundary—lies exactly opposite to the range of the eye, when the spectator, in moving round from left to right or from right to left, looks before him in a direction neither above nor below the natural plane of his vision. It is important that the learner should have a clear and distinct apprehension of what this horizontal line is; because it is to this line that every other line is referred, and that by its means the accuracy of the drawing is secured.

DISTANCE OF THE PICTURE.

In Fig. 1 a landscape is supposed to be viewed from the spot marked *E*; and that the spectator is desirous of representing on the plane of his paper a certain portion of the scene as seen by him from this point. That portion constitutes his *real* picture.

Here, therefore, arises the first question; that

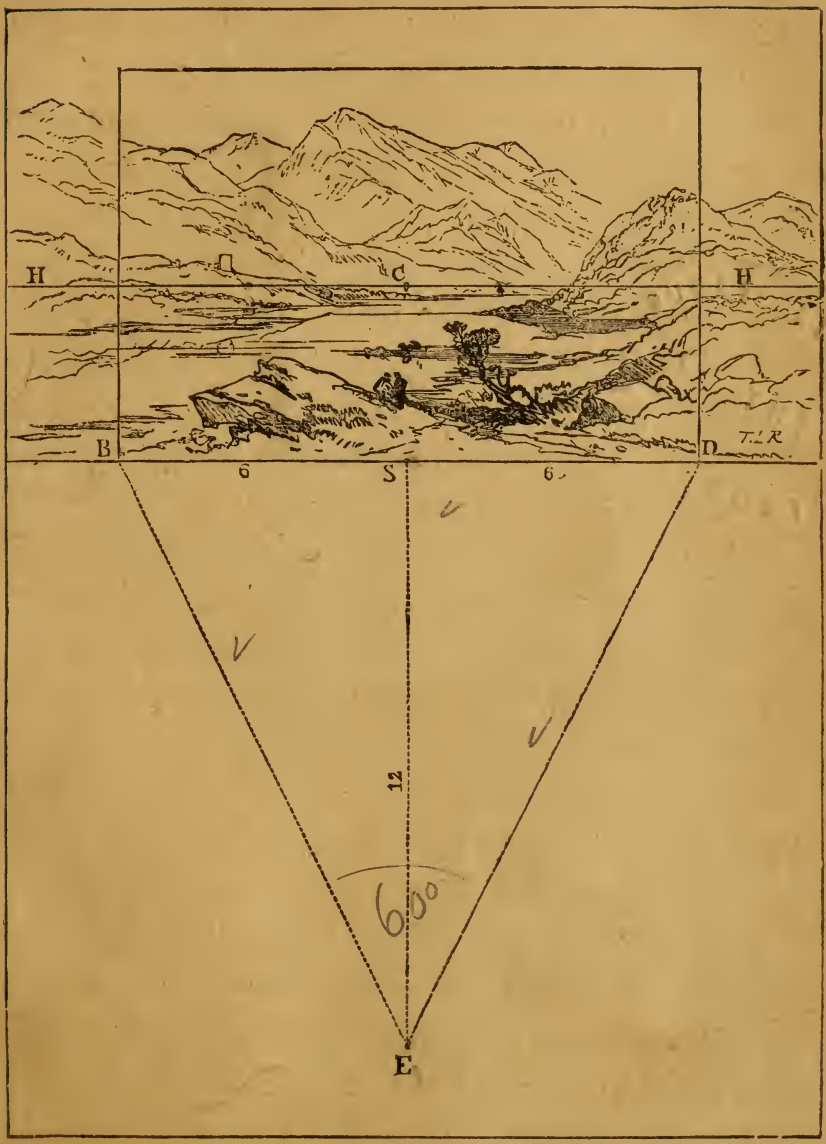
* The word *horizon* is nothing more than the participle of the Greek verb signifying "to bound."

of determining how much of the landscape or the objects he is viewing, should be contained within his proposed picture.

The distance of the picture,—or distance of the eye from the plane of the picture (which is the same thing),—means the distance intervening between the spectator's position, and that point on the ground directly in front of him, where the picture, which he is about to make, ought properly to commence. Upon the choice of a proper and judicious distance, the beauty of his work will in a great measure depend.

Suppose the landscape to be viewed from the point *E* (Fig. 1), then that portion of the scene which the eye can easily take in, without moving the head, and without the slightest strain upon the optic nerve, will constitute the picture from that point. This size is very important to observe, for if the head is turned either to the right or the left, a *new* picture is made, through the change of focus,—and this is a distinction very often misunderstood—from whence arises a panoramic view instead of the artistic picture the draughtsman had intended to produce.

FIG. I.



Now, under this condition, the spectator will find that he does not distinctly see the ground immediately before him, but that he obtains a perfectly easy view of it only at some distance from his position at *E*. It is the space included between the point *E* (where he is placed), and the supposed point alluded to, and here marked *S*, that establishes the required distance of the picture, that is, the distance of the eye from the proposed picture. For instance, let *S* be that point on the ground immediately in front of the eye, and if through *S* a straight line be supposed to be drawn, perpendicular to the distance *E S*, this line will pass through and determine the foremost objects of the proposed picture, and therefore at this line the picture must commence.

THE EXTENT OF THE PICTURE HORIZONTALLY.

The next process is to determine how far along this line the view should extend to the right and left of the point *S*.

Pace the distance from *E* to *S*.

Suppose it to prove twelve paces.

Place a mark at *S*, a glove, or stick, or any object that may be distinctly seen from the position *E;* then walk six paces from *S* in the direction *S D*, and there leave another visible mark; also six paces from *S* to *B*, where a third mark should be placed. All the objects seen between the marks at *B* and *D* will constitute the intended picture, as viewed from the point *E;* the lines drawn at *B* and *D* perpendicular to *B S D* being the sides of the picture.

If it be objected that, from the nature of the ground, this principle could not in some cases be carried out, it will at least be admitted that the student may make himself thoroughly acquainted with it by first practicing on places offering no obstacle to his attempts; and he will thus soon be enabled to form a proper judgment, as to the distance and boundaries of his picture, under any circumstances whatever.

It must, however, be observed, that this forms the *extreme* limit of the picture laterally. Any portion of the view may be taken, within that limit; as is exemplified in the Frontispiece of this book.

THE VERTICAL LINE.

That an accurate notion of the vertical line may be obtained, the plane of the picture must be supposed to be perpendicular to the horizontal plane.

If a straight line be drawn from the spectator's eye, perpendicular to this plane of the picture, that line will fall upon the plane at a point in the horizontal line directly opposite to the eye. In Figs. 1 and 2, *C* is this point, and it is called the *centre* of the picture, or centre of view. In reference to the eye of the spectator, every straight line *perpendicular* to the plane of the picture appears to converge towards this point or centre. The line which, drawn from the eye of the spectator, determines this centre *C*, is called the *vertical line*. It is a straight line through *S*, perpendicular to the horizontal line, and the base of the picture ; and in Figs. 1 and 2 is is represented by the line *E C*.

In Fig. 2, the lines and points before described are further illustrated; and to impress them clearly on the mind of the student, we recapitulate them, as they are exemplified in this figure.

E is called the point of sight, or place of the eye.

C, the centre of view, or centre of the picture; being the point on the horizontal line *H H*, immediately opposite to the eye.

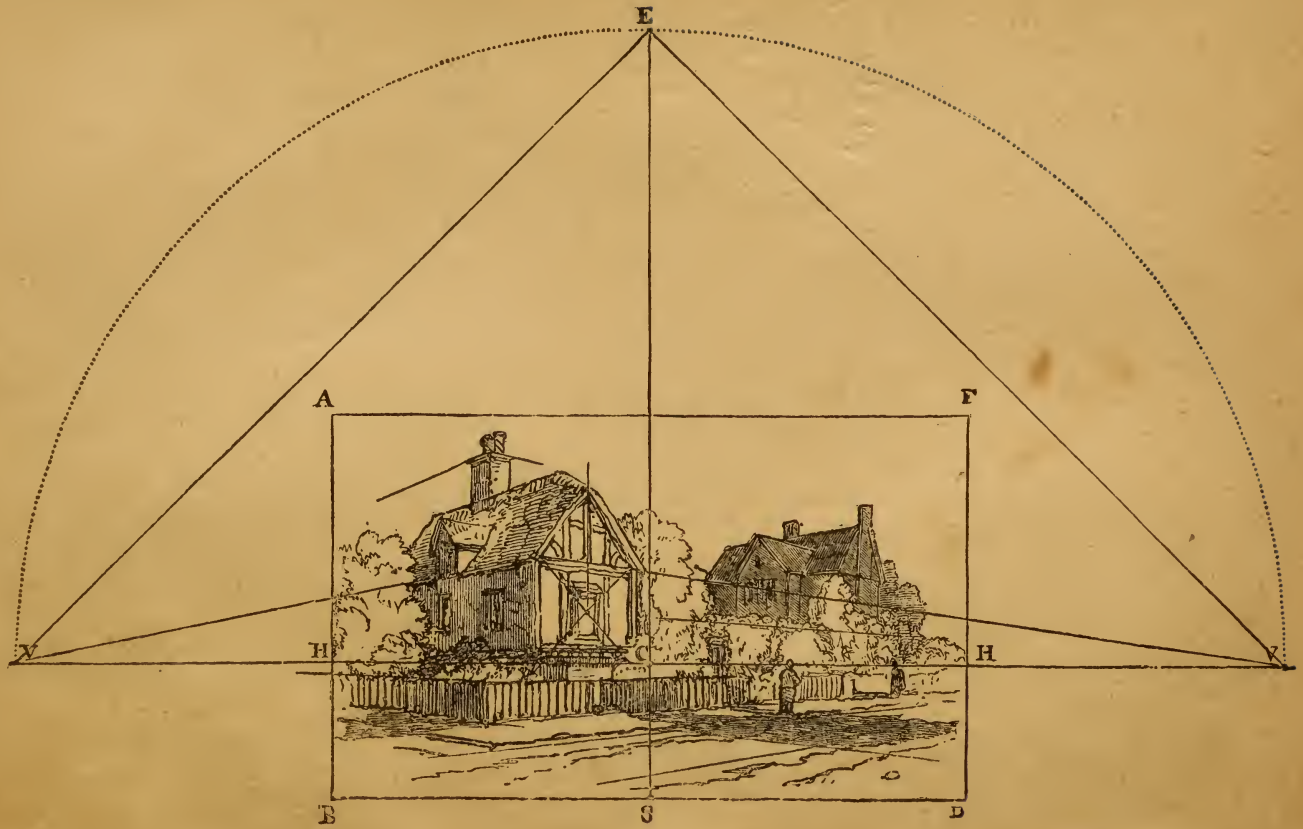
(This point *C* must not be mistaken for the centre of the paper; it bears no such meaning, for it is marked occasionally somewhat rather to the right, or to the left, of the middle of the horizontal line; but in all cases it is termed the "centre of view," or "centre of the picture.")

B D, the base line, equal in length to *E C*:

S, the point on the ground immediately opposite the foot of the sketcher, as *C* is opposite to his eye:

E S, the vertical line—the length of which is equal to the supposed, or known, distance of the eye from the commencement of the picture at *S*. It is necessary to explain that *E* is not the real position of the eye, and that it is re-

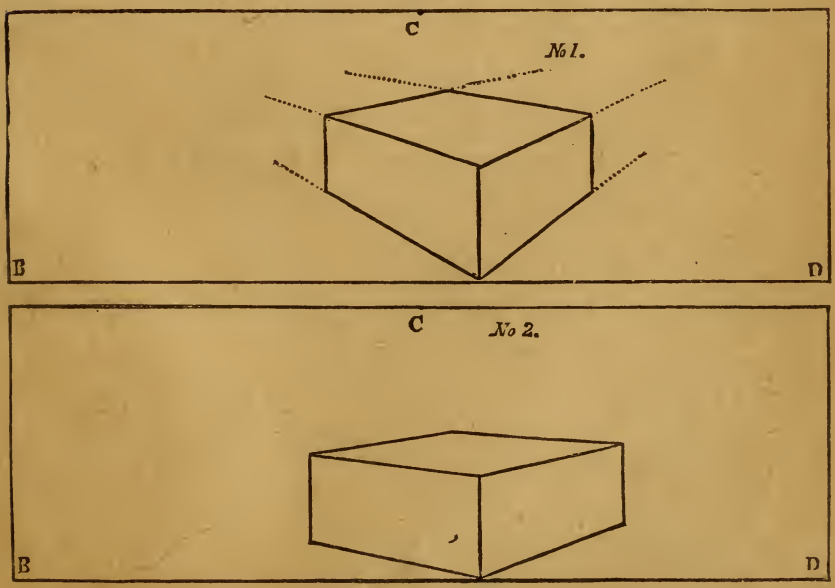
FIG. 2.



quisite for *practice* to draw the length of the vertical line *E S* upon the paper, and as this cannot always be done with convenience *below* the base line, as in Fig. 1, it may be drawn *above*, as shown in Fig. 2; the only limitation being in this case that the extent of the base line *B D* is determined by *E C*, not as in Fig. 1, by *E S*, as the space from *S* to *C* is allowed for the height of the eye above the ground.

The use of this vertical line is the same, whether it be drawn above or below the centre

FIG. 3.



of view *C*; and it is shown in the two positions, in Figs. 1 and 2, merely because it is frequently more convenient to mark the point *E* above, than it would be to place it below, the horizontal line.

Upon the length of the vertical line *E C* depends the just and natural representation of objects. If it be too short, they will appear unsatisfactory, and more or less distorted.

The following example will illustrate the truth of this statement (Fig. 3).

A block of wood or stone (Fig. 3) is to be represented at different distances; it has a square base, and is seen in a position in which its sides are oblique to the plane of the picture:—seen, in fact, from both points, under the same circumstances in all respects as regards surrounding objects, except that the perpendicular distance of the spectator from the base line *B D* is much less in one than in the other.

In Fig. 3, No. 1, the distance of the point of view, from which the spectator sees the stone, is only half the length of the base line *B D* (that is, of *E C* in Fig. 2).

In No. 2, the distance of the spectator is equal to the entire length of *B D* (*i. e.* of *E C* in Fig, 2). This distance may, in particular cases, be made greater, but in no case should it be less.

A slight glance at each will show how much more satisfactory to the eye the drawing is in No. 2 than that in No. 1 ; although it is, in fact, in both cases strictly accurate according to the *distance adopted.*

In both instances (Figs. 1 and 2), the centre *C* of the picture is placed in the middle of the horizontal line *H H;* but it may be placed somewhat either to the right or left of that position, according as the sketcher may be disposed to stand a little to the right or left of the centre of the proposed view. These alterations of *C* will of course modify the appearances of the objects, under principles hereafter to be explained.

PROPER POSITION FOR THE HORIZONTAL LINE.

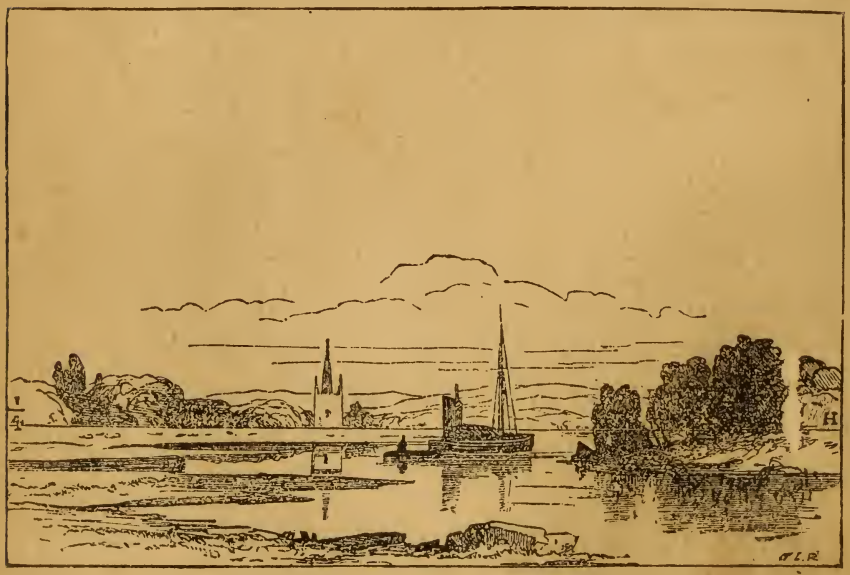
The proper position of the horizontal line will depend on the nature of the view to be repre-

sented. Hence the sketcher must consider—

First, whether he himself and the objects he is about to represent are on level ground, or nearly so.

If the view be on a plane nearly level, the horizontal line may be drawn at about one-fifth, or one fourth, of the height of that space of his paper which is intended for the picture (Fig. 4).

FIG. 4.



Secondly, whether the ground be undulating, or whether the objects be viewed from a car-

riage, or from the lower windows of a building, or any similar moderate elevation.

In this case, the horizontal line may be placed at about one-third the height (Fig. 5).

FIG. 5.



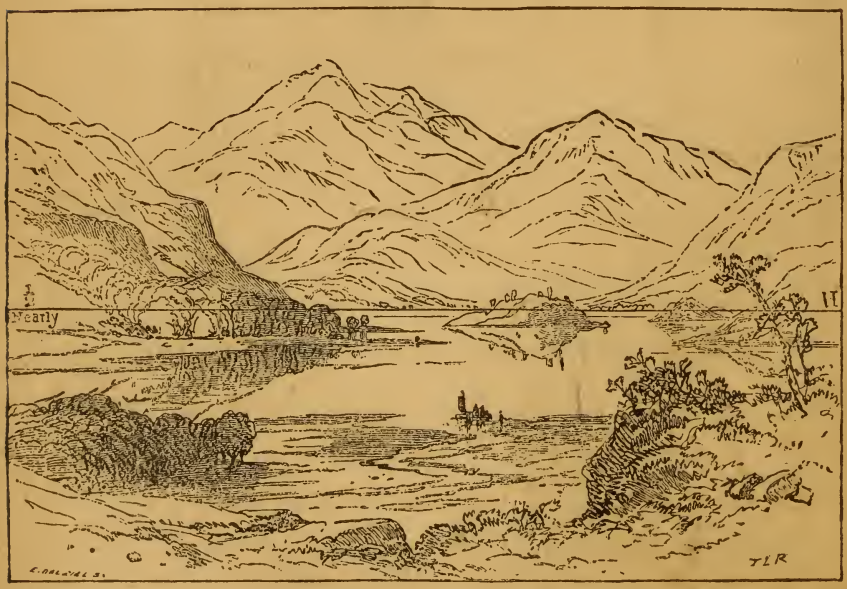
Thirdly, whether the scenery be mountainous, with a lake ; or whether the objects be viewed from some *considerable* elevation.

In this case let him choose a position that will command a good view of the scene, and prevent closer and more immediate objects from

concealing any portion of the remote distance ; and though the height of the horizontal line in this case may *sometimes* be a little more than half the height of the paper, according to the elevation attained by the spectator to command the view, yet it is desirable not greatly to exceed this ; otherwise, what is called "a bird's-eye view" will be the consequence (Fig. 6).

In the following example, the horizontal line is drawn at nearly *half* the height of the paper.

FIG. 6.



We may here incidentally observe, that, as a general rule, the sketcher will find it advantageous, after having drawn a faint horizontal line, at its proper height, to ascertain, by holding up his pencil horizontally on a level with his eye, what object, *or part of an object*, appears on that point of the horizontal line immediately before him; the island, for instance, in the above sketch. He may begin his drawing by representing such object at that point, and proceeding right and left, on the same level, to the extremities of his picture. This will greatly assist in guiding the delineation of the remainder.

OF THE UP-HILL VIEW.

All horizontal planes,—*appearing* to ascend if they lie below the horizontal line, and to descend if they lie above it,—vanish or merge in the horizontal line. So also all parallel sets of horizontal straight lines, not parallel to the horizontal line *H H*, appear to descend, if they lie above it, or ascend, if they lie below it, to some point it the horizontal line; in which point they

converge or vanish. Thus in painting, the sea and sky are considered horizontal planes, and we have already instanced their apparent meeting in the horizontal line. So again, in representing the interior of a room—the floor and ceiling (if flat and parallel to one another) appear to approach each other, and would, if indefinitely produced, meet or vanish in the horizontal line of the spectator, as their common vanishing line.

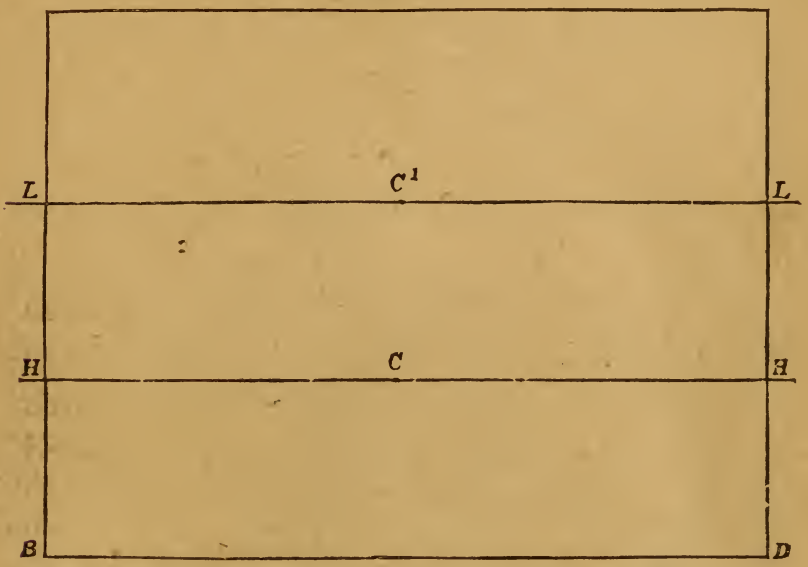
But suppose the ground before the position at *E* (Fig. 1) to form an incline plane instead of a horizontal one; a plane inclining upwards from the base line, at some known or supposed angle. In this case such an inclined plane will meet the plane of the picture in a line above the horizontal line: hence there will be two vanishing lines on the paper,—one whereby to delineate objects on the horizontal surface; the other by which to draw those situated on the inclined plane.

The following diagram will make this clear.

In this figure (Fig. 7), *B D* is the base line; *H H* the common horizontal or vanishing line;

C the centre of view in that vanishing line; *L L* the vanishing line of the ascent; and C^1 the centre of view in that vanishing line.

FIG. 7.



It is obvious, that in proportion to the less or greater inclination of the supposed plane, the line *L L* will be nearer to, or more distant from, the horizontal vanishing line, *H H*. Towards some point or points in this line *L L*, the representations of all right lines parallel to the surface of the ascent must be drawn; as is seen (Fig. 8) in the felled trees, the ruts in the road,

the upper and lower lines in the wooden palings, &c.

But the lines of the brick wall, and those horizontal lines of the house, which are hori-

FIG. 8.

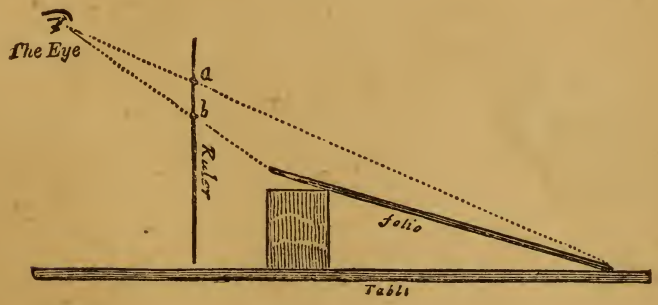


zontal and also perpendicular to the plane of the picture, are drawn towards the vanishing point *C* in the horizontal line *H H*.

OF THE DOWN-HILL VIEW.

If a descending plane be visible to the eye of the spectator, it is clear that it can be represented upon paper; and the *remotest*, that is, the *lowest* lines of the descending plane of the view will have, in that representation, a higher place on the plane of the picture, than the *nearest*, that is, the *highest* ones of the actual view. This is shown in the following diagram.

FIG. 9.



Place on the table, at a short distance from you, a drawing-board, a portfolio, or any other

plane, having the nearer end supported, so as to be inclined at an angle under which the plane is yet visible; and let a bystander hold a straight ruler, vertically, at a small distance from the nearer edge; it will then be found that the lower and more remote edge of the plane will appear higher on the ruler than the nearer one, the lower edge being seen at *a*, the upper edge at *b*. Merely, however, to draw two horizontal and parallel lines across the paper, for the purpose of representing a descending plane by the space between them alone, without the assistance of other lines in contrast with them, would be impossible; but whenever the descending plane is visible, the effect of descent can be readily conveyed by means of auxiliary lines on the surface of that plane, assisted by a judicious use of light and shade.

Again;—let the sketcher suppose himself on a hill descending directly from him, and that a yard or two in advance of him a line is drawn across the road parallel to his position, and another line a few yards further down parallel to the first; it would be found, on holding a

pencil upright at a little distance from the eye, so as to appear to cut both lines, and on looking at them with one eye closed, that the lower line of the descent would cross the pencil transversely at a higher point than would the upper and nearer line.

In this example (Fig. 10), the spectator is supposed to be on such a hill having the vanishing line *L L* of the descending plane, and the horizontal vanishing line *H H*, in their proper positions. Then all lines on the descending plane, or parallel with it,—as the timber, the

FIG. 10.



marks of the wagon-wheels, &c.,—tend towards the vanishing line *L L*, while the horizontal lines of the house and wall tend in the direction of the horizontal line, and if produced to that limit, would converge and there be lost. In this example, the lower extremity of the descent is evidently,—as, according to the principle laid down, it ought to be,—higher on the plane of the paper than the upper one.

ON THE REPRESENTATION OF HORIZONTAL STRAIGHT LINES;

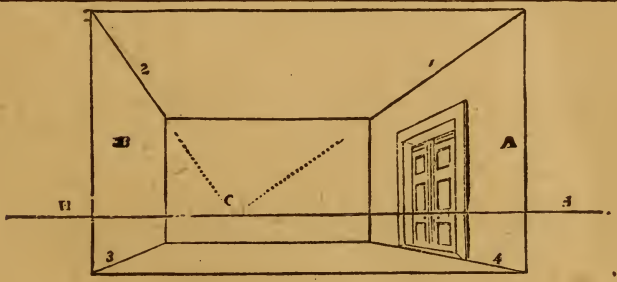
WHETHER PARALLEL, PERPENDICULAR, OR OBLIQUE, TO THE PLANE OF THE PICTURE.

A *horizontal* right line has, with respect to the plane of the picture, one of three positions. It is either parallel to it, or oblique to it, or perpendicular to it. The following supposition will explain what is meant by these three relations of a horizontal line.

Let the student suppose himself sitting with his back against one of the walls of a rectangular room. The wall opposite to him is parallel

to that behind him, and consequently to the plane of his picture in that position. The two remaining walls being at right angles with that opposite to him, are evidently perpendicular to the plane of the drawing, and all *horizontal* right lines on those two walls are also perpendicular to that plane, and will appear to tend towards a point immediately opposite to his eye.*

FIG. 11.



H H (Fig. 11) is the horizontal line or level of his sight, *C* the point opposite his eye, and

* This convergence of lines towards a vanishing point, as appears in the retreating sides of the room at 1, 2, 3, and 4, in Fig. 11, is very difficult to believe from ordinary observation. The student will find the truth of it by the simple experiment of shutting one eye and holding a knotted string with the knot opposite his eye, and then if the other end of the string is moved to rest against the lines 1, 2, 3, and 4, he will find that to be true in reality, which Fig. 11 demonstrates.—[EDITOR.]

that point towards which all horizontal right lines on the walls *A* and *B* appear to slant; though in *reality* they are perpendicular to the wall at *C*.

The lines 1 and 2, where the ceiling and the side-walls meet, and 3 and 4, the lower limit of the walls, as well as the horizontal lines of the door and its panels, are, in that position of the spectator, all perpendicular to the plane of the opposite wall, and therefore to the plane of the drawing.

The representation, upon the plane of the paper, of a horizontal straight line, ought to be carefully and distinctly apprehended. The effects of the projection or drawing of these different positions of the horizontal straight line may be understood from the following diagrams and explanations. Let a straight line be placed *horizontally before the sight*, and in a direction perpendicular to the vertical plane; but let it be a little above, or a little below, the level of the eye; it will appear as if perpendicular to the ground. (See Fig. 12.)

Thus *C* is the point opposite the eye; 1 and

2 represent a straight line held immediately above or below the level of the sight at *C*. The line will now *seem* to the eye to be perpendicular to the ground; the alteration being, in fact, the apparent diminution of the line as to its length. Now, if it be placed above the level, as before, and be removed to the right or left, it will appear as in Fig. 13.

FIG. 12.

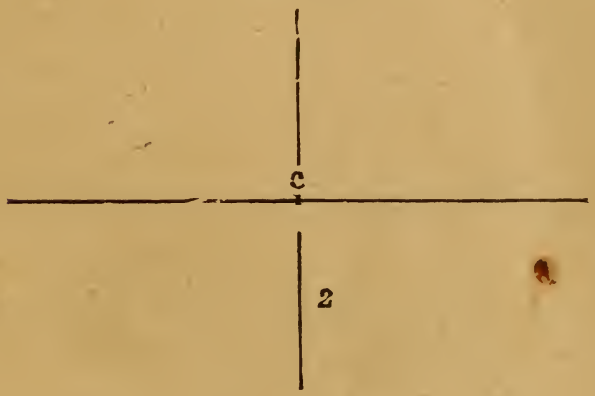
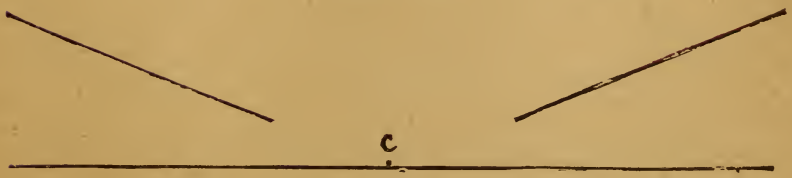
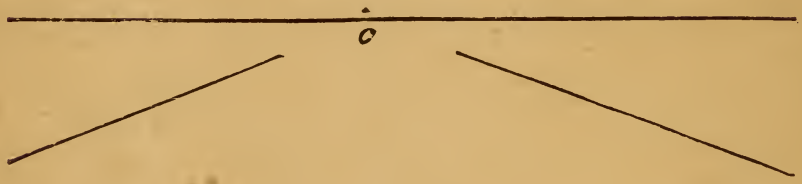


FIG. 13.



And if below the level of the sight, it will appear to take such a direction as this :

FIG. 14.



But if on the right or left of the eye, and on a *perfect level*, and either oblique or perpendicular to the plane of the picture, it will fall into the horizontal line, thus :

FIG. 15.

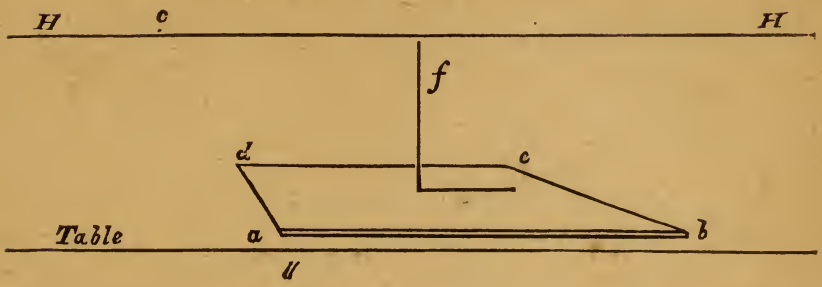


And, lastly, if it be placed immediately opposite to the eye, the projection will be a point; the end, as it were, alone being visible.

These conditions may be illustrated by placing on a table a portfolio, into the upper leaf of which is fixed a long pencil-stick, perpendicular to the plane of the leaf. Let the lower edge of the folio be even with the edges of the table, as the line *a b* in the diagram.

Let the spectator seat himself a little to the

FIG. 16.

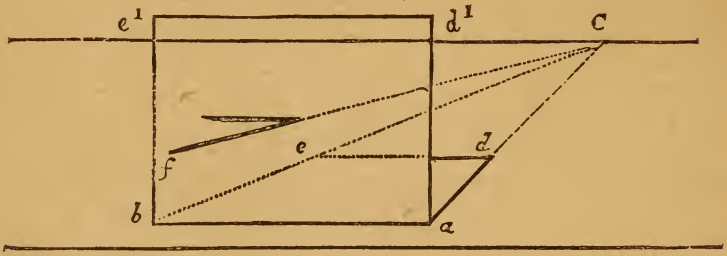


left of the folio, the point *C*, on the horizontal line *H H*, representing the point immediately opposite the eye; then the sides *a d* and *b e* of the folio will appear to tend towards the point *C*, the centre of view; the pencil stick *f* appearing, as it really is, perpendicular to the table.

Now let the upper leaf of the folio be raised until its plane be perpendicular to the plane of the table. The relations of the lines *a d* and *b e* with the horizontal line are now changed, and the stick *f*, still remaining perpendicular to the leaf of the folio, becomes by the change of position, *perpendicular to the plane of the picture*; and like all lines similarly disposed, it tends towards the centre of view *C*, while the sides *a* d^1 and *b* e^1 are now perpendicular to the

table, and appear to be much longer than when seen in their original position.

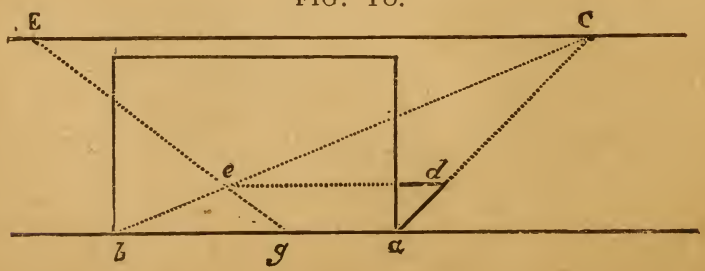
FIG. 17.



This diagram (Fig. 17) exemplifies the horizontal right line as seen parallel and perpendicular to the plane of the picture; two of the three relations ascribed to it. The lines so parallel are *a b* and *d e;* the lines so perpendicular are *a b*, *d e*, and the stick *f*. .

The apparent increase of dimension of *a d*, when raised from its horizontal position, having been shown, the manner of determining the length of this side of the folio, when lying flat, is as follows :

FIG. 18.



Having drawn (Fig. 18) the horizontal line through the centre of view *C*, and the edge of the folio parallel to it, and having marked the centre of view as at *C*, set off *C E* on the horizontal line, at a distance from *C* equal to the supposed distance of the eye from the point *C*. It has been laid down as a rule that the distance of the eye from the centre *C* should be equal to the width of the picture; but in drawing a *single object*, a *shorter* distance will suffice to show the principle of construction.

From the point *b* to the line *a b*, make *b g* equal to one of the shorter sides of the folio; join *b C*, *a C*, and draw a straight line from *g* to *E* cutting by *b C*, in *e*, and draw *e d* parallel to *b g* cutting a *C* in *d*; then *a d e b* will be the representation of the leaf lying on the table, and *a d* will be the *apparent* length of that side of the folio. If the point *E* were transposed to the *other* side of the centre *C*, then *b g*, instead of being marked towards the right hand from *b*, must be set off from *a*, towards the left hand, and the result will be the same.

OF LINES OBLIQUE TO THE PLANE OF THE PICTURE.

The third relation remains to be explained; namely, that of horizontal straight lines oblique to the plain of the picture.

If the folio, with one leaf remaining flat and the other vertical, be moved ever so slightly, but obliquely from the position in which we have considered it, the lines *a d*, *b e*, and the stick *f*, will no longer tend towards the centre of view *C*, but will become oblique to the plane of the picture, and have other vanishing points in the same horizontal line, but approaching to, or receding from *C*, according to the degree of inclination of *b e* and *c d* to the plane of the picture.

The position of these vanishing points will depend upon the degree at which the horizontal straight lines are inclined to the picture. For if the lines be perpendicular to the plane of the picture, we have seen that *C*, the centre of view, is the vanishing point for all such lines. If the lines be parallel to *H H*, the vanishing point will be at an infinite distance from *C*. Hence

it is evident that the vanishing point will retire from *C*, as the angle of the given line with the horizontal line becomes small, or as its angle at *E* with *E C* becomes greater.

On these principals the law of the variation of this vanishing point may be determined.

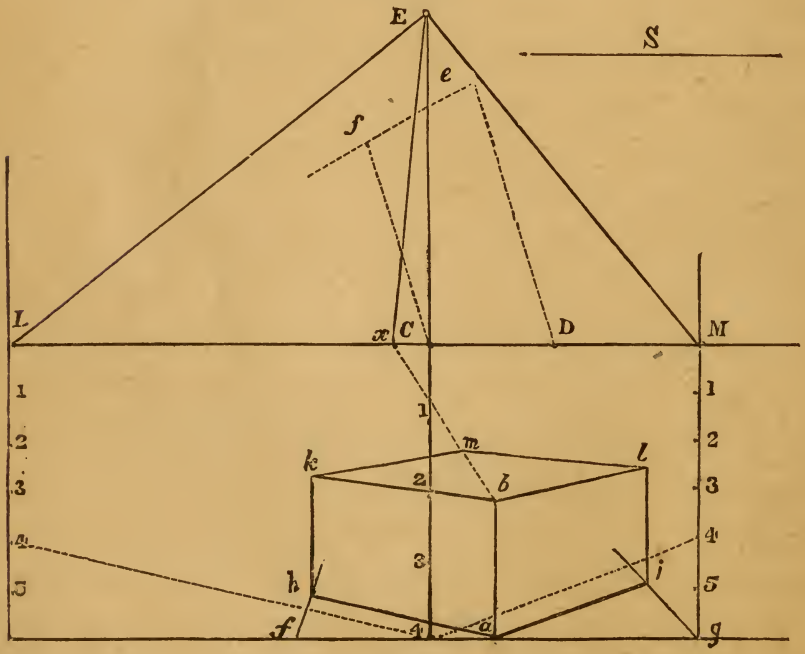
First, let the angle made by the given inclined line be half a right angle. This case is exemplified in Fig. 2, in which the lines of the gable, ridge, chimney, window, &c., stand at an angle equal to half a right angle, or 45°, with the horizontal line. In this case the vanishing points, on both sides, are *V* and *V*, the extremities of the semicircle *V E V*.

Secondly ; let the inclination of the lines to the horizontal line, and to each other, be represented by the angles of a rectangular and horizontal block of stone, similar to that represented by No. 2, Fig. 3, where the vanishing points are considerably beyond the limits of the picture, or paper, an inconvenience of constant occurrence when a *proper distance* is used for the representation of the object, but which the following expedient is calculated to obviate.

The base line, the horizontal line, the centre of view, and the vertical line being drawn as before, also the near vertical edge (*a b*) of the block, proceed thus :

Make *C E*, on the vertical line, equal to, say, $\frac{1}{3}$, the proper distance of the eye from *C*, (which distance may be more, but never less, than the extreme dimensions of the picture, whether it be

FIG. 19.



higher than wide, or wider than high), and con-

struct the right angle *L E M* in such a manner that both the points *L* and *M* may fall within the limits of the paper, as seen in the figure. Then the point *E* will be the representative of the true place of the eye, and the points *L* and *M* the representatives of the true vanishing points, which would be, respectively, on the horizontal line produced, equal to three times *C M* on that side of *C*, and three times *C L* on the other; whilst the true place of the eye, on the vertical line produced upwards, would be equal to three times *C E*.

Produce *E C* to the base line; also bisect the right angle *L E M* to *x*; *x* will be the vanishing point of the diagonal of the square block; draw *b x*. Through *L* and *M* draw lines (any length) parallel to *E C*.

Take *any* small opening of the compass, and mark the space off repeatedly from *C* to the base line, or even below it if necessary; and, if any portion of the object to be drawn reaches above the horizon, do the same also from *C* to *E* (or higher, if required). In this example the whole of the object is *below* the horizon. Number those

divisions from *C* downwards, as in the figure, and, if required, upwards from *C*, in a similar manner.

Take in the compass as many of these divisions as make *one less* than the number of times *C E* is contained in the true distance of the eye; in this example it is contained three times; therefore take two divisions from the vertical line, and mark them off downwards (and, if necessary, upwards) from *L* and *M*.

Subdivide each of those divisions into as many equal parts as C E is contained in the true distance, in this case 3; and number them as in the figure.

Now, if from any point (*a*) a line be drawn in the direction of the two corresponding points on the divided lines, it will tend towards the true but inaccessible vanishing point as required.

Thus a line drawn from the upper corner of the vertical edge (*b*) through the points 2 and 2, on the left hand, will tend towards the true vanishing point of that line; and which is also the vanishing point for all horizontal lines on the left side of the object. A line from the lower

corner (*a*) drawn at a properly proportioned distance between 4 and 5 on the lines through *C* and *M*, will tend towards the true vanishing point on that side; and which is also the proper vanishing point for the remaining horizontal lines on the right side of the figure. In order to determine the proper apparent extent of the sides, let the line *S* represent their *real* length; and mark off from *L* along the horizontal line the distance *L D* equal to *L E*.

On L and *D* raise *any* two convenient right lines parallel to each other, as in the figure, and make *D e* equal to *S*. Join *e L*, cutting the line on *C* at *f*: *C f* will be proper measure for the sides of the block.

On the base line make *a f* and *a g* each equal to *C f*. From *f* and *g* draw lines towards *C*, meeting the lines previously drawn from *a* at *h* and *i*. At these points *h* and *i*, raise perpendiculars to meet the lines drawn from *b* at *k* and *l*; from *l*, and through a point about midway between 1 and 2 on the *left* hand, draw *l m*, meeting the diagonal *b x* in *m*, and join *m k*. This completes the figure, the whole of the

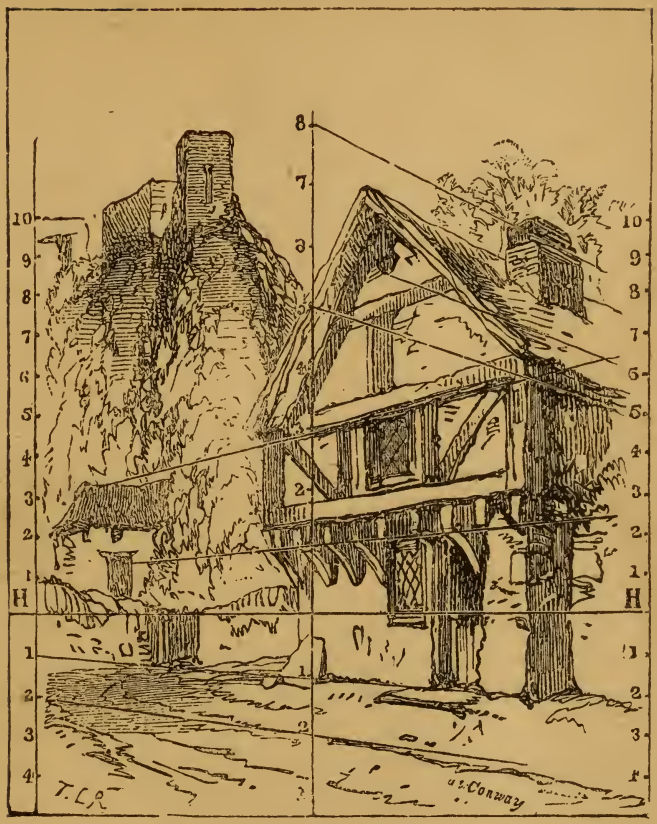
necessary points being within the boundaries of the paper; and thus is obviated the difficulty arising from the vanishing points being inaccessible on the plane of the paper.

A little practice will enable the sketcher, in determining his lines, to dispense with points and the ruler altogether, except where occasionally the use of a pencil may be desirable to draw a straight line with sufficient accuracy.

If the angles formed by the original lines (as the right angles formed in this case by the sides of the block) be greater or less than a right angle, a case of frequent occurrence, all that is required will be to draw *L E* and *E M* inclined to the vertical line *E C* at angles equal to the given angles.

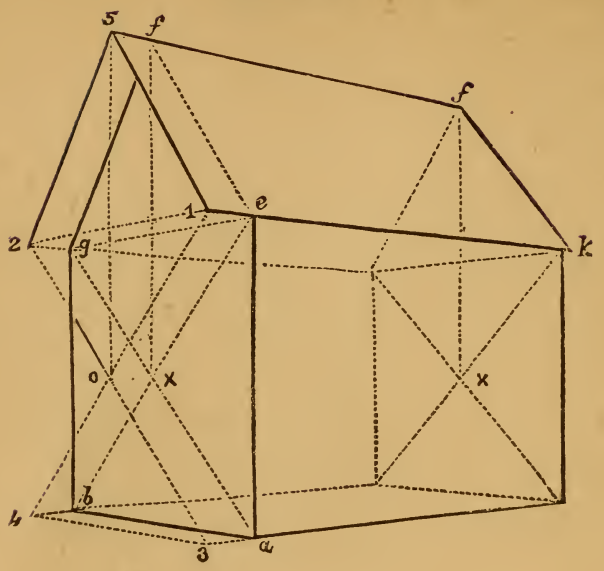
In the example in Fig. 20, the horizontal lines, forming the wood-work in front of the building, and those of the roof, are oblique to the plane of the picture, and have a tendency to points considerably beyond the limits of the paper; but the difficulty is met by the rule already laid down, in reference to Fig. 19, and is here exemplified in application to a pictorial object.

FIG. 20.



The oblique lines of the gable are represented according to their angle of obliquity, and their position in relation to the plane of the picture; but for general sketching purposes it will be sufficient to draw diagonals as illustrated in Fig. 21.

FIG. 21.



In this diagram (Fig. 21), or in any similar sketch to which the rules of its construction apply, the lines of the unseen parts of the structure, which are here dotted, may be lightly put in with a pencil, so that when the visible lines and surfaces are firmly represented, the light lines may be effaced. The vertical and horizontal lines, *a e*, *a b*, *b g*, &c., being determined by the preceding rules, and diagonals *a g*, *e b*, &c., being drawn, perpendiculars are raised on their intersections at *x x*; that in front being

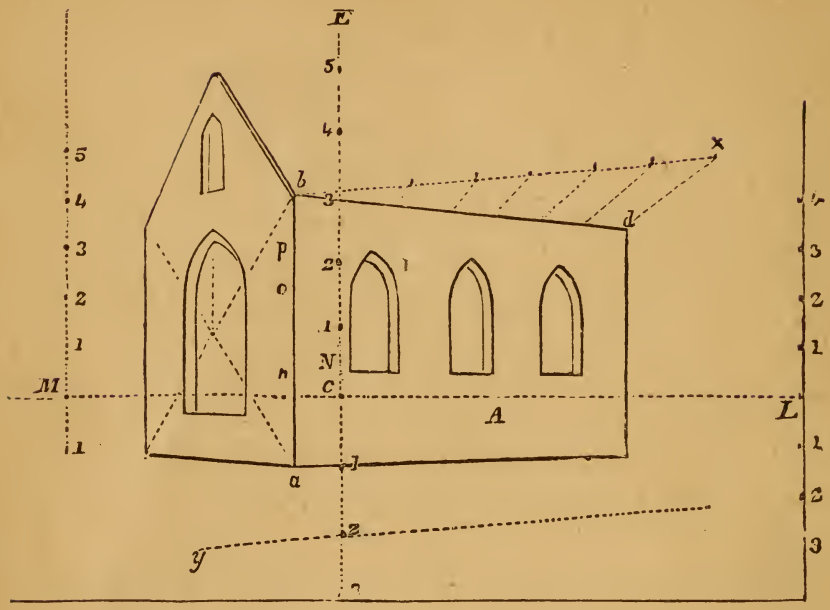
determined by the assumed height of the gable, as *x f* (or the height of the apex of the pediment, if there be one). Draw the oblique lines *e f* and *f g*.

If the roof projects, as it does in Fig. 20, produce outwards the horizontal lines of the walls and the ridge of the roof to the apparent extent, as at *e* 1 ; and draw a line from 1 towards the proper vanishing point, which will give the point 2. Now produce the lower lines *a* 3 and *b* 4, making *a* 3 equal to *e* 1 ; then a line from 3 towards the same vanishing point will give the point 4 and the junction of 1 4 and 2 3 will give diagonals intersecting at *o*, whence a perpendicular is raised, meeting the line *f f* produced, at 5 ; and 1 5 and 2 5 are the oblique lines of the projecting roof.

Thus in the construction of this figure every necessary point is found within the limits of the paper, although the same relations could at once be established by means of the vanishing points, if requisite.

The structure represented in Fig. 22 may be drawn according to instructions given in reference to Fig. 19.

FIG. 22.



Thus, as before, let *C E* be equal to one-third of the true distance of the eye, and the distances of *L* and *M* respectively equal to one-third of the distance of the true vanishing points from the centre of view *C*.

Through the corresponding numbers 3 and 3, or 2 and 2, in the lines drawn through *M*, *E*, and *L* respectively, draw lines which will tend to the true vanishing point of the horizontal

lines of the wall, in which three openings or windows, with their piers, are to be represented according to their proper scale of relation.

This is usually effected by drawing a line from *a* or *b*, parallel to the horizontal line, on which the geometrical measures of the piers and windows are marked off from *a* or *b*, whichever may be adopted. But in *this* case a confusion of lines would ensue from the adoption of such a course ; an inconvenience which may be obviated by drawing from *b* a line *b x* of any length and paralell to that running through 2 and 2 below *M L*, and by then marking the windows and piers upon it in their proportionate geometrical widths from *b* to *x*. Then a line drawn from *x* through the corner of the wall at *d*, to meet that through 2, 2, below *L M*, at *y*, gives a point at *y*, towards which lines from all the divisions on *b x* may be drawn, dividing the upper line of the wall, as seen in the figure ; from which divisions perpendiculars may be dropped, showing the proportionate diminutions of the widths of the proposed windows.

Again ; let *a n* on *a b* be the height of the

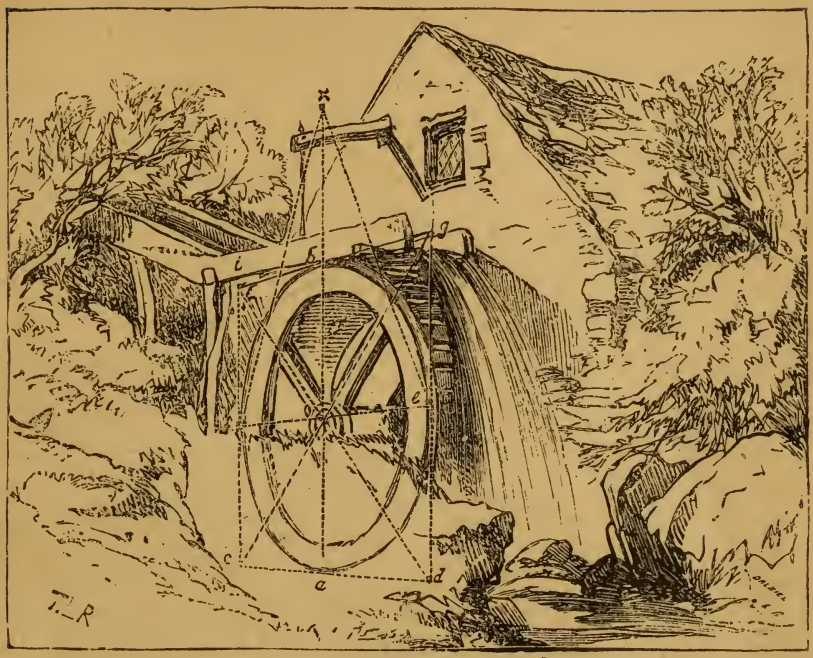
lower line of the windows from the ground, and let *n o* be the height of the springing of the arch from the bottom of the windows, and *o p* the height from the chord to the apex of the arch, and from these points *n o p*, draw lines towards the vanishing point of the line *b d*; this, by crossing the perpendiculars, will decide the heights of the windows. The point for the apex of each arch may be found by means of diagonals.

CIRCULAR OBJECTS.

Among the circular objects which may, in the course of experience, present themselves to the sketcher, perhaps few would cause him more embarassment in their delineation than a mill-wheel; which, when viewed obliquely (and it is seldom represented otherwise), presents an elliptical or oval form. The drawing, however, of this object will be readily effected by the following application of the foregoing rules.

Let *a o b* be the vertical diameter of the wheel; then, according to the preceding rules,

FIG. 23.



draw the right lines *c a d*, *f o e*, and *i b g*. Draw *d e g* parallel to *a b*, and at a distance from it equal to the *apparent* width of half the diameter (which in this position will appear somewhat less than the real semi-diameter); draw *c f i* parallel to *a b*, but still less distant from the centre *o* than *d g* is, because *o g* is more remote.

Produce *o b* to *x*, making *b x* equal to *o b*. Draw *o i o g*; then lines drawn from *x* to *e* and

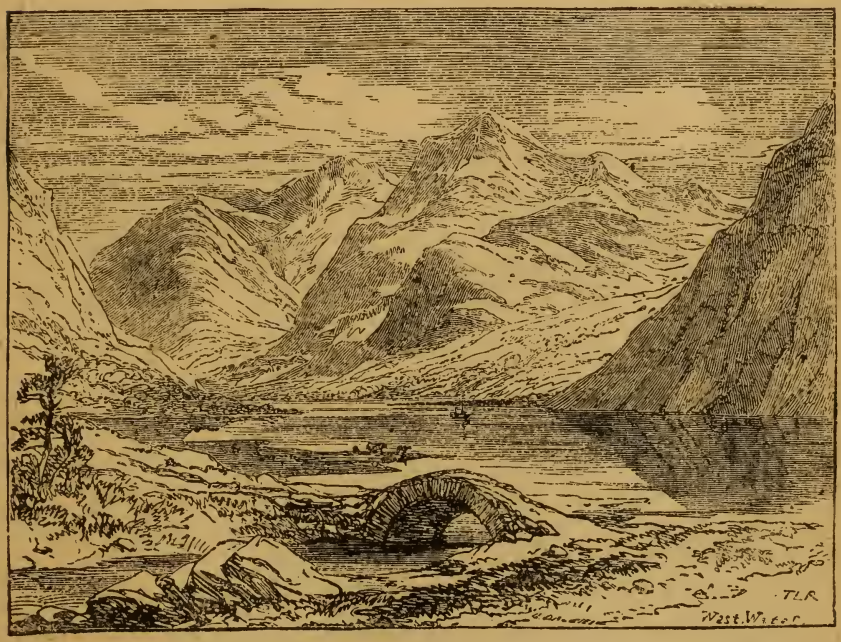
f will cut *o g* and *o i* in two points, through which the curve must be described, and touching the straight lines at the points *e b* and *f*. The wheel being an overshot wheel, the lower portion is not visible. Should, however, the entire wheel be seen, the lower points for the curve will be on the diagonals immediately beneath the others, as shown in the figure.

The student may have recourse to similar means for drawing the circular arches of a stone bridge. It seldom, however, happens that a bridge of this kind is a desirable object in a landscape, unless perhaps in the distance, or in the middle distance, of the picture. Arches, however, are frequently found in association with the most romantic features of nature ; such, for instance, as that near Aberystwith, called the Devil's Bridge, and many others.

Some of the stone bridges in the lake districts of Cumberland and Westmoreland are extremely picturesque. They are of very rude construction, being in many cases formed only of loose stones for the passage of sheep and herds of cattle over small streams ; it is, however,

from their very ruggedness that they derive their interest, surrounded as they frequently are by scenery of much grandeur. The sketch below affords a specimen of this kind of simple and picturesque bridge; it is thrown over a small stream flowing into West Water, one of the most picturesque of the Cumberland lakes.

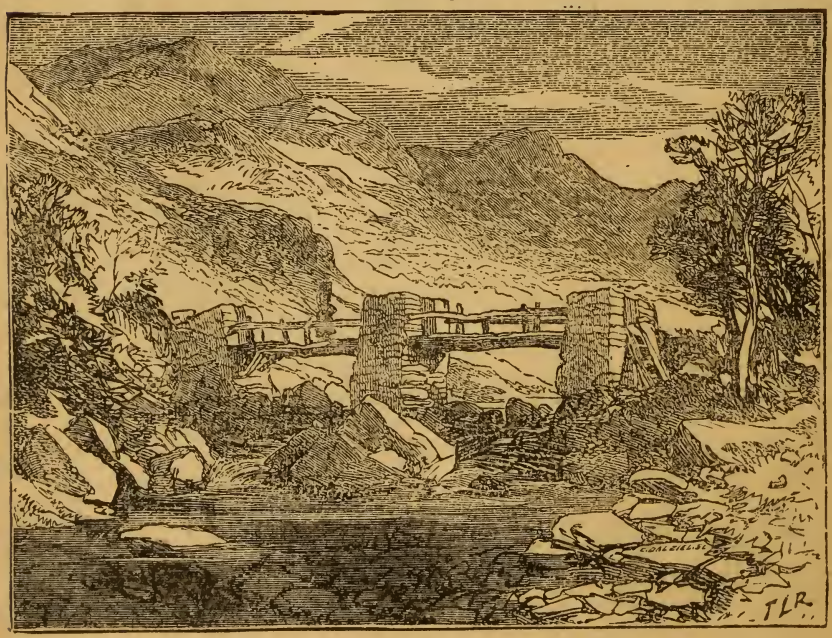
FIG. 24.



The subject of the frontispiece is "Stockley Beck," in Cumberland, which, in combination

with a portion of the mountainous district amid which it is situated, forms a passage of landscape scenery that in pictorial interest can scarcely be surpassed. It is only in Wales, in Scotland, and in the lake districts of England, that such combinations are met with. This, and other similar sketches are introduced here, only to afford to the student examples of this class of scenery, and to illustrate the selection and treatment of a sketch.

FIG. 25.



The rude bridge forming the subject of Fig. 25 crosses one of the streams that flow from Snowdon. It is near Beddgelert; and so picturesque is it from every point of view, that no sketcher goes into the neighborhood in which it is situated, without making a drawing from it.

ON THE CHOICE OF SUBJECT.

As the strict end of our instructions here is to assist the sketcher in gaining a facility in simply delineating real objects and combinations of objects, it is desirable that it should be understood that this is only the first step towards learning to draw from nature, An easy, rapid, and decided manner of sketching is to be acquired only by practice. It is an acquisition essential to excellence in all the other artistic qualities to which it serves as a basis; therefore it would be here altogether out of place to propose a discussion on color, manipulation, and all those questions of feeling and execution, which, brought forward at so early a period of progress, would only serve to divert the student from the

attainment of the power of dealing with these effectively hereafter. These subjects are entered upon in their proper places, in the series to which this little book belongs.*

It is, however, necessary that the sketcher be assisted in the choice of subject matter. The exercise of a little judgment in this respect will render his progress agreeable to himself and his works presentable to others. To beginners, the great precept of one of the most accomplished of our living landscape-painters is, to "study little bits,"—a precept which will apply equally to sketching as to painting.

Among the subjects forming the woodcuts which illustrate these instructions, there are many which might serve as initiatory essays; and others of various degrees of progress, even to compositions which might be worked up into drawings and paintings of considerable beauty. All artists have some peculiarity in their method of sketching; and rapid and broad sketches are frequently intelligible only to those who make them. One of the best qualities, however, of a

* Putnam's Series of Art Handbooks.

sketch is, that it should not only refresh the memory of the artist, but should be suggestive and intelligible to every one.

With a little education, the eye will discover material for study everywhere. London and its environs abound with subjects of picturesque beauty. Hampstead, Highgate ; the banks and wharves of the Thames down even to the Nore ; every suburban locality ; all the green lanes, and the commons with which they communicate, abound with materials which may be wrought into pictures of the highest degree of interest. These are the localities which have contributed to form many of the best of our landscape-painters ; and so it is elsewhere ; there is no spot in the country so entirely divested of picturesque character, as not to supply to the cultivated taste subject-matter for an interesting picture. In confirmation of this, it is only necessary to look around our exhibitions, to see numerous works of great beauty and interest, produced from materials in themselves apparently extremely slight.

Having made himself master of the principles

here laid down, the sketcher might select for commencement some single object, such as the quaint old gable in Fig. 20. A subject like this is sufficiently good to be drawn from various points of view, and it should be studied in such a manner, that, at any subsequent period, a colored drawing might be made from it. Fig. 1 exemplifies a composition of lake and mountain scenery, in which the expression of the pencil is sufficient to show the relation of the objects. Through the middle distance to the foreground, the touch is gradually strengthened, and the most decided and darkest lines appear in the nearest parts of the view. The water is left nearly white. This sketch is as slight as it well can be, to be worked out into a subsequent finished picture. Fig. 4 forms an extremely simple subject, a winding river with a boat, a few trees, and a distant spire; there is more than mere outline, but still no more than may be gracfully effected by the pencil; and in Fig. 5, wherein the church-tower is the prominent object, the place of the sun would cause the amount of shade which gives force to the sketch. The

frontispiece is a very carefully studied sketch, which might be colored, with little modification, according to its present distribution of light and shade.

In accordance with the principle which recomends simple subjects to beginners, the student will do well to sketch some easy group or single object. It frequently occurs, that with objects of picturesque character there are associated others which do not harmonize with them. In such case, a point of view should be sought that would exclude these objectionable forms. Middle and remoter distances afford facilities for their modification; but a certain amount of practice will be necessary to qualify the student to deal successfully with these niceties.

COMPOSITION OF LINES AND FORMS.

Every production of art, of whatever kind it may be, is reducible to its elementary construction of lines and forms; and upon the skilful disposition of these depends the excellence of the composition of the picture. The essential

spirit of composition is "variety:" but, in order that the whole may be, with ease and with pleasure to the spectator, comprehended in one view, it is necessary that all the minor parts be so harmonized as to form one well-balanced whole, consisting of a few prominent masses or groupings, which, according to the principle law of composition, must be diversified in magnitude and form. One of these masses should be treated as the principle, and the others dependent upon it and contributive to it; but it is necessary that they be distinct in appearance and place, although all coincident in respect of the proposed sentiment. Whatever form may be determined on, it is necessary to guard against a fixed regularity—an equality and repetition of parallel, rectilinear, and circular forms; —indeed, whatever be the general outline of these masses, it must neither be too regular, nor, on the other hand, too much broken; the continuity must rather be slightly indicated than absolutely and sensibly determined. And in order that nothing may be wanting, the various components should preserve an evident relation

among each other; they should be associated in such a manner that none may appear entirely detached, the larger masses being broken and relieved by the minor and subordinate parts; showing a whole so well balanced, that no one part can be abstracted without the deficiency being at once felt.

If we turn to the frontispiece, and consider the dispositions observed in that composition, we shall see that the positions of the principal objects are not the result of mere chance, but that they are brought into this combination from a particular point of view, which is determined as most favorable in this case to picturesque composition. The principal features in view are the bridge, the stream and the mountain. By the emphasis with which the bridge is treated, it is brought forward to the eye as a principal object; but it does not, nevertheless, occupy the centre of the composition, nor does the stream flow in a direct course down the centre of the drawing, nor the mountain rise to a cone equidistant from both sides. These dispositions are effected with a view to avoid that

balanced formality against which we have cautioned the learner. Again, with respect to the arch, it contrasts with the irregular shapes of the rocks and stones lying near it; and no two of these are of like form. The lines, descriptive of the descent of the mountain, necessarily tend in one direction; but a formal parallelism is avoided, and the lines are modified by light and shade. In artificial objects, parallels necessarily occur, as in buildings of all kinds; but such lines and parts are rather indicated than harshly forced upon the eye; and, by the aid of light and shadow, they are reduced to purer breadth and harmony.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

In an outline sketch, it is found that outline alone is inadequate to the representation of an object in relief; it cannot give substance, nor define relative distances so as to maintain the objects in their proper places. We have urged the necessity of judicious selection of subject-matter; and we have now to observe, that, how

well soever the subject may admit of composition, it is yet necessary that it be effective in its light and shadow; for it greatly depends upon the happy or unskilful distribution of these lights and darks, whether a composition will appear confused and broken, or agreeably united into one harmonious whole. There are times when the most commonplace material may strike us as beautiful; while conversely, the most charming scenery may become void of interest. The matter of fact representations of the breadth of a meridian light, and the same passages of landscape viewed under the shades of evening, affect the feelings very differently. In the latter, there is a charm which operates even upon minds less susceptible of impression from the beauties of nature: and if it be necessary to cultivate a discrimination even with respect to degrees of the beautiful, how much more necessary is it to aim at acquiring the power of conferring importance upon, and investing with deep interest, any slight subject-matter which we may have to treat. This is, after all, the test of the master—the power of giving, by

means of judicious light and shade, importance to matter comparatively insignificant. The general principle acted upon by all artists, is to dispose the lights and shades of their work in the manner best suited to the treatment they propose for their work. If we turn to Fig. 5, we find a dark mass reared against a light sky and immediately supported by shaded objects of different degrees of depth, and repetitions of dark in the foreground; with very little change, this arrangement of light and shade might be adapted to a great variety of combinations.

The simplest form of effect is the opposition of two masses. If the subject be dark, as a building or a group of trees, it will be relieved by a light sky; if it be light, the sky will be darker. This simple opposition we mention, in order to observe, that in every pictorial composition it prevails in the great masses and throughout the details; but the principle* is concealed in proportion as the work is successful. Every dark must be relieved by light, and every light must tell against a dark; this is a law of natural

* Ars est artem celare.

T.L. Rowbotham fecit
1857

chiaroscuro, and in art it is the principle of relief: but the contrasts must not seem either harsh or artificial.

Some of the most charming effects in nature are those resulting from the direct opposition of light and dark. No effect is more susceptible of poetic treatment than that of moonlight. An example of this is given in the last cut, wherein the lower masses of the ground, and the tower, are made to tell in strong relief against the moon and the sky. Again, the higher forms of the trees, rising against the subdued tones of the upper sky, afford diversity of form and variety of gradation, which assist in forming the principal point of interest, and balance the gradations in the lower part of the composition.

The forms of light and shade are subject to the same laws as those of objects; hence, if a subject he treated with a breadth of light the principal mass must not regularly divide the composition either vertically or horizantally. If shade prevail in the picture, the same rule applies; but light or shade may be introduced at either side of the picture, occupying there the

entire plane, and diminishing to a point at the opposite extremity of the horizon.

In a light picture, a simple and agreeable effect is produced by placing the principle dark or most substantial point on the right or left in the foreground, and by approaching from this point towards the base of the picture and the horizon with graduated tones broken and varied according to the kind of objects introduced.

The examples of light and shade here reccommended are extremely simple; and a knowledge of them will prepare the student for an acquaintance with dispositions of greater complexity.

THE END.

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